

# COMMON LARGE SEAHORSES of Southeast Asia

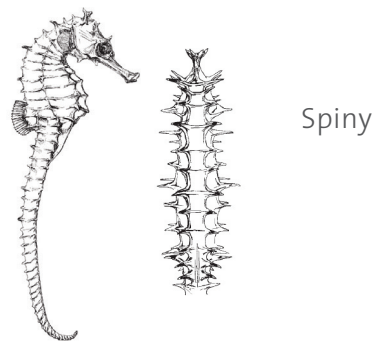
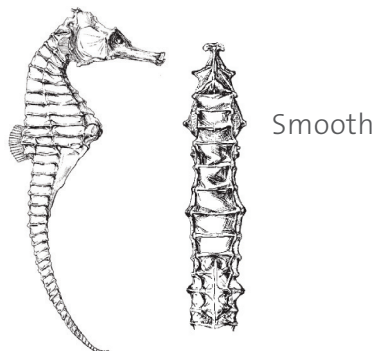
## Seahorses in Southeast Asia

Currently there are 14 recognized seahorse species in Southeast Asia. There are nine common large species, which can be broadly divided into two groups—“spiny” and “smooth.” Spiny seahorses have spines or spikes covering their bodies, while smooth seahorses do not. If your seahorse is not listed here, go to [www.iSeahorse.org](http://www.iSeahorse.org) for pictures and descriptions of other seahorse species.

## Masters of Disguise

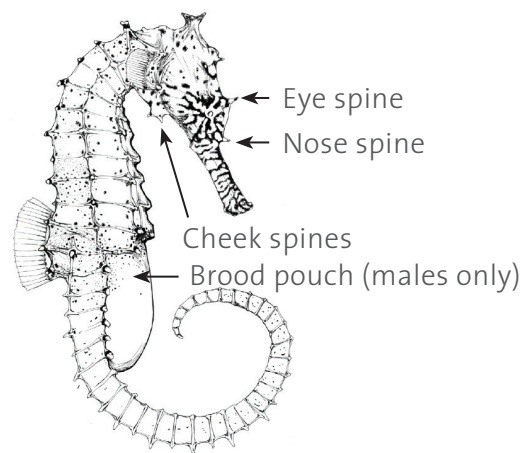
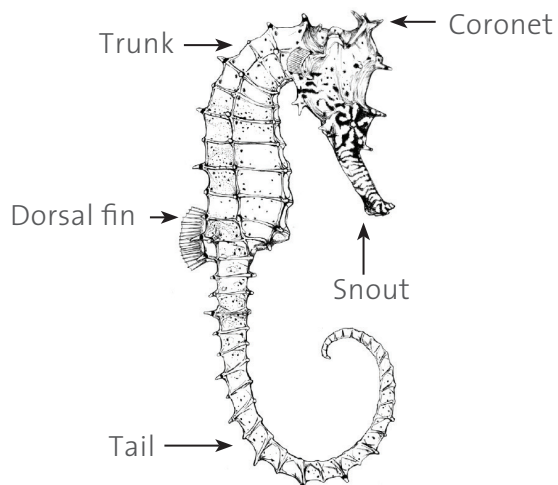
Seahorses are well-camouflaged, and individuals can be covered by seaweeds and sediments in the wild. **Color and lengths of skin filaments (“hairs”) can vary for individuals within the same species and so are NOT useful for identification.** Practice your identification skills before starting surveys.

## Is the seahorse smooth or spiny?



## Seahorse Parts

*Hippocampus barbouri*



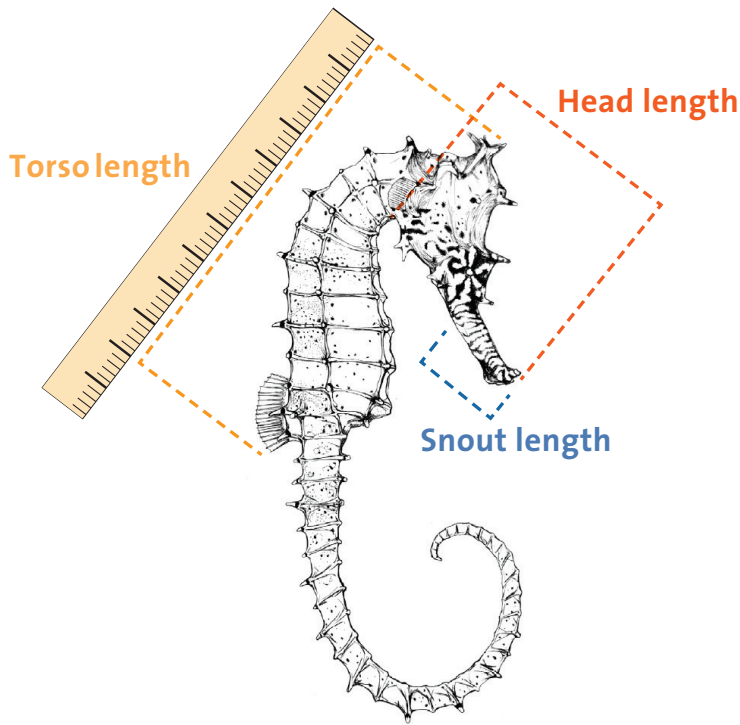
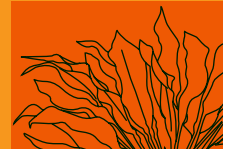
### Female

In females, the belly does not extend past the **bottom of the dorsal fin**. If you are uncertain, it is likely male.

### Male



# Don't Know Which Seahorse Species? How to Photograph for ID



For unknown species, record the following characteristics:

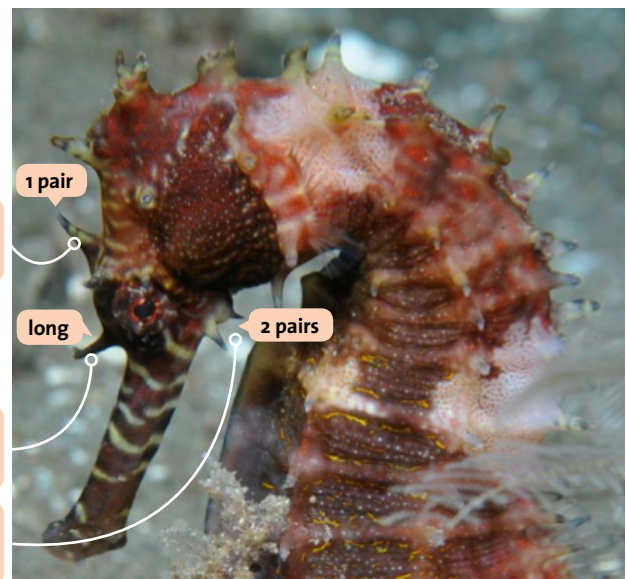
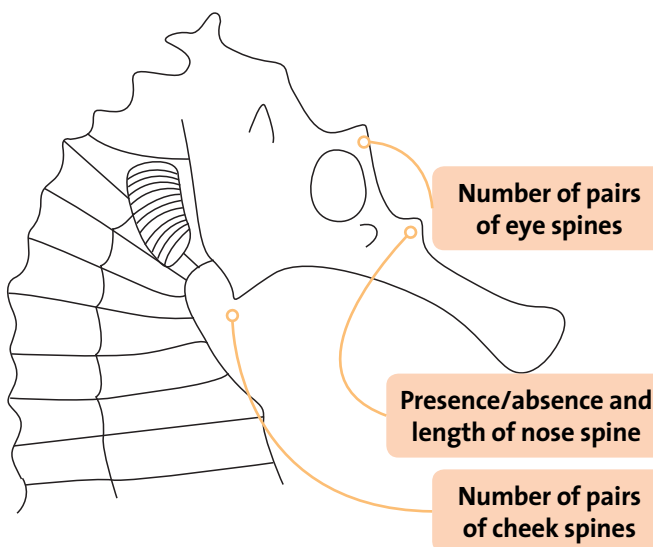
- **Torso length**  
(distance from top of coronet to base of dorsal fin)
- **Head length**  
(from immediately behind the operculum – the flap covering the gills – to tip of snout)
- **Snout length**  
(from bump immediately in front of the eye to tip of snout)

or

Take a photo of the side profile of the seahorse with a ruler and calculate these measurements from the photo.

## Also record and photograph a side view of the head showing

- All facial spines and coronet
- Number of pairs of cheek spines
- Number of pairs of eye spines
- Presence/absence of nose spine, and if present, whether it is long (prominent) or short (low)
- Any other distinguishing features, e.g., spines or bumps on body, stripes on snout/tail



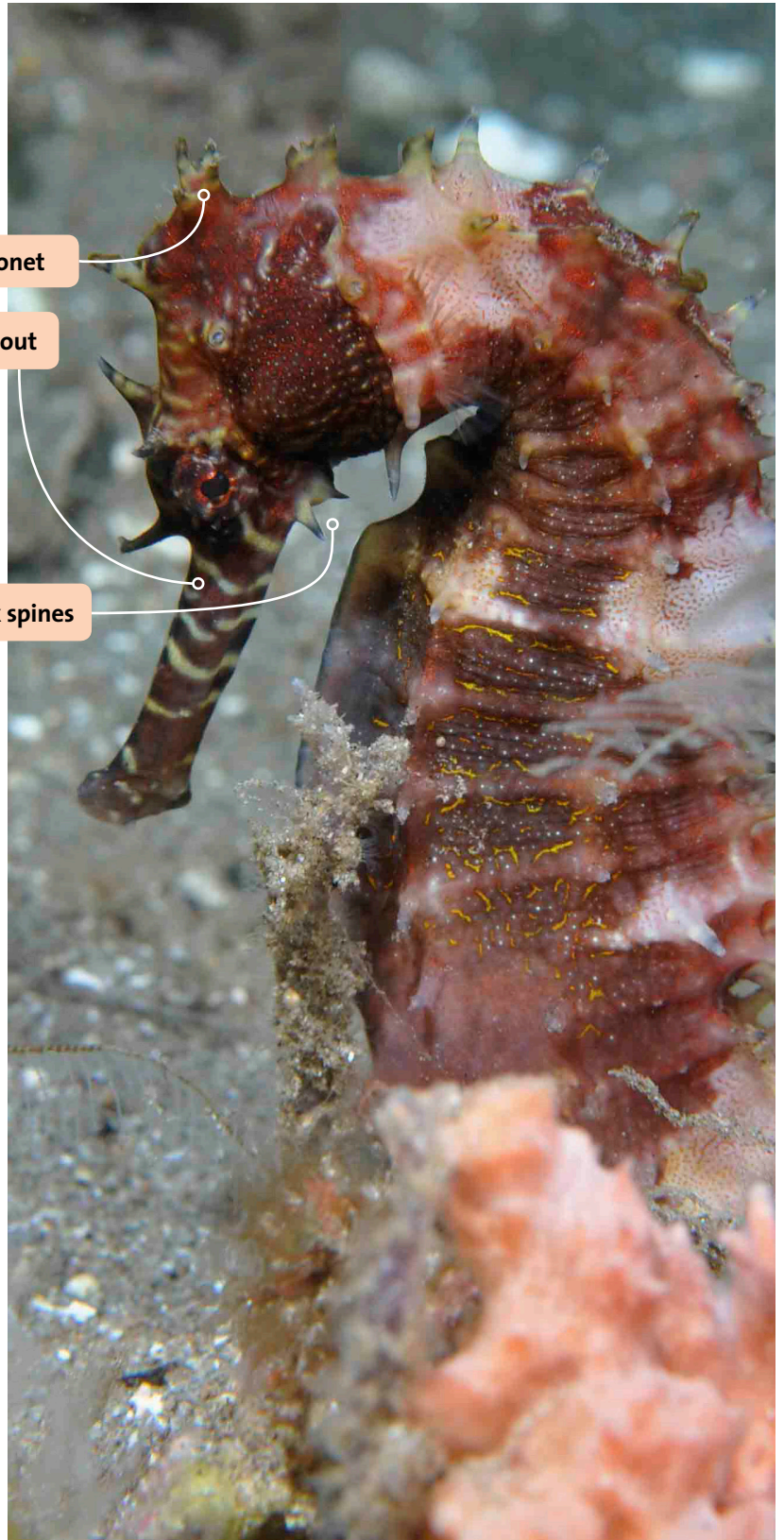
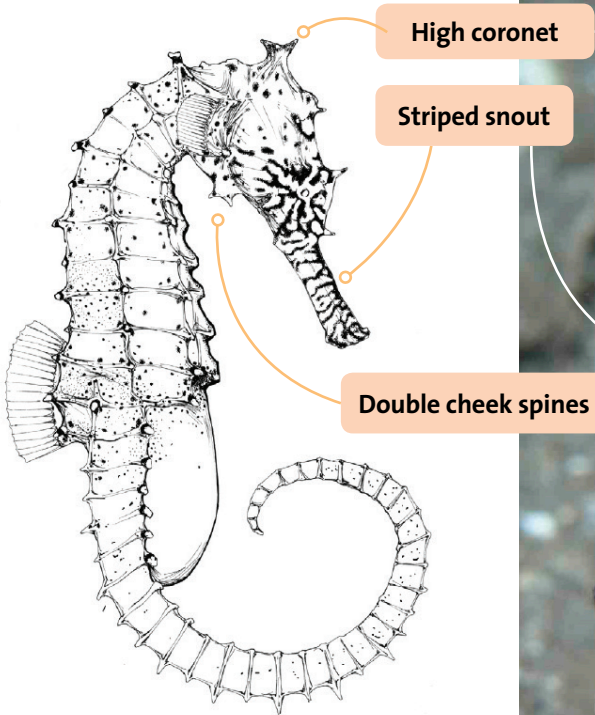
*H. barbouri*

Photo: Theophile Peeters

# BARBOUR'S SEAHORSES

## *Hippocampus barbouri*

- Two pairs of cheek spines
- Prominent nose spine
- Stripes on snout
- Spine in front of coronet



Color variation of *H. barbouri*.

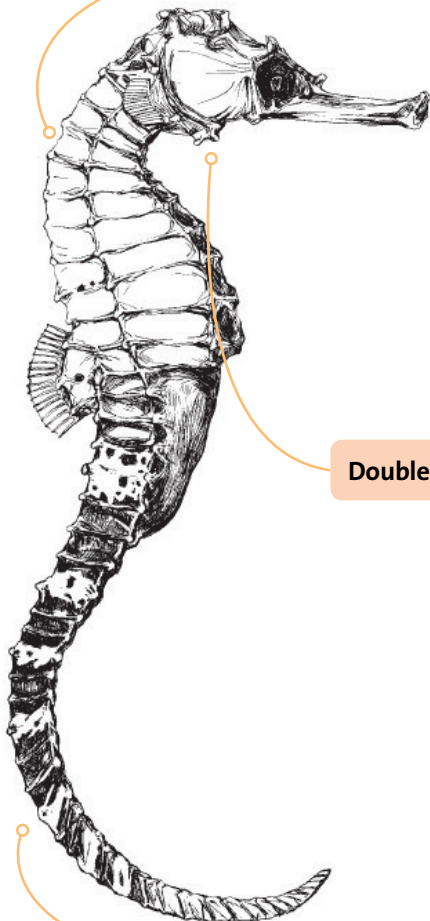


Photo: Shedd Aquarium/Brenna Hernandez

Photo: Theophile Peeters

# TIGER TAIL SEAHOSE

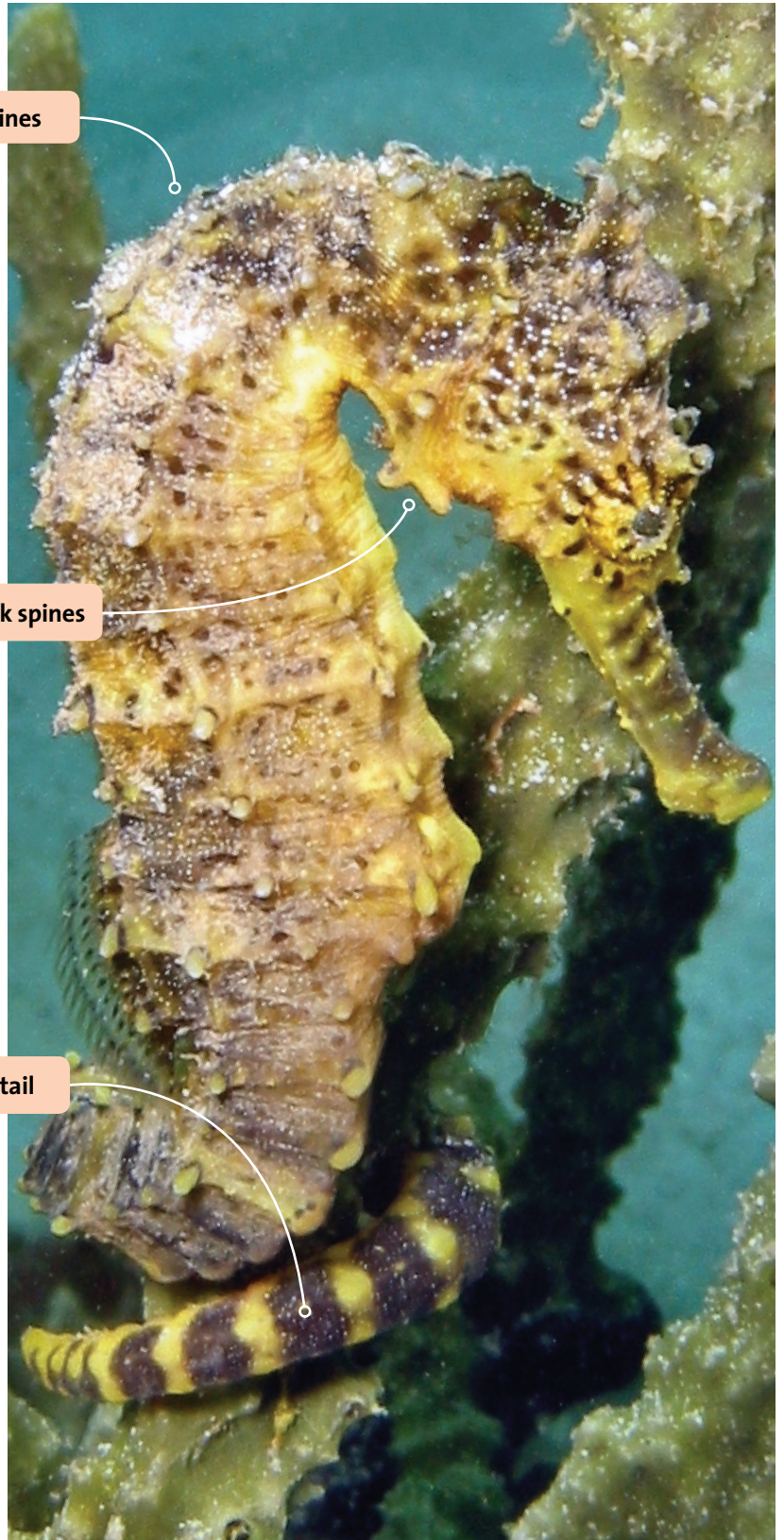
## *Hippocampus comes*



Blunt spines

Double cheek spines

Striped tail



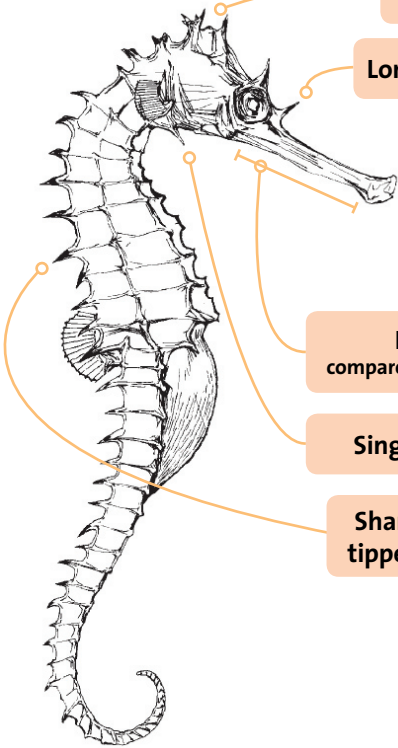
- Double cheek spines
- Prominent nose spine
- Rugged spines on body (spines not sharp)
- Low coronet
- Striped tail (can look blotchy)
- Small head relative to body

Photo: Antidio Rossi

# SPINY SEAHORSE

## *Hippocampus histrix*

- Long snout
- Single cheek spine
- Sharp spines on coronet
- Prominent nose spine
- Sharp body spines



Sharp spines on coronet

Long nose spine

Long snout compared to *H. spinosissimus*

Single cheek spine

Sharp, often dark-tipped body spines

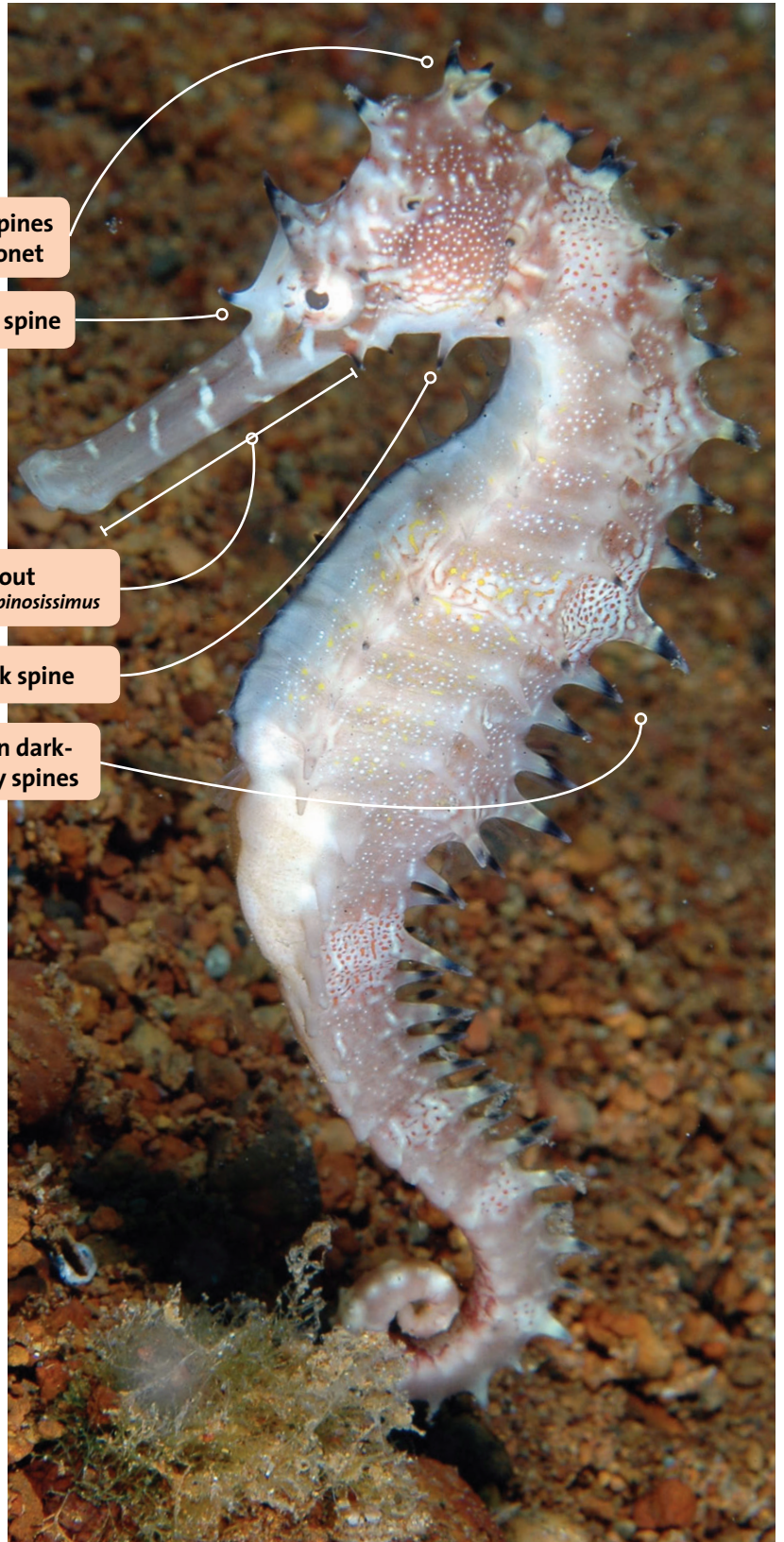
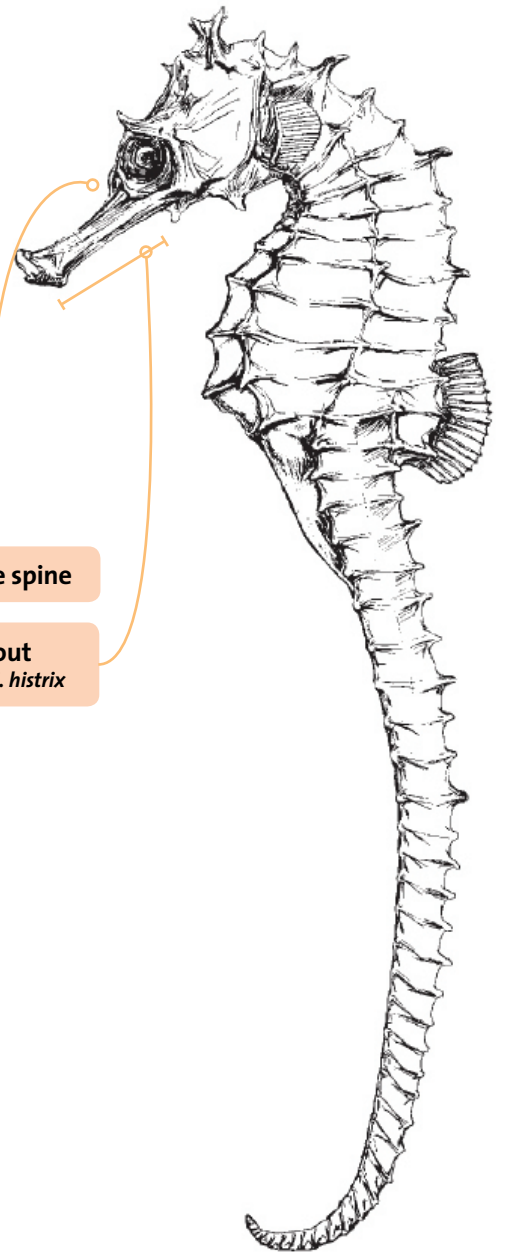


Photo: Roland Wantense

Photo: Jeffrey Low

# HEDGEHOG SEAHORSE

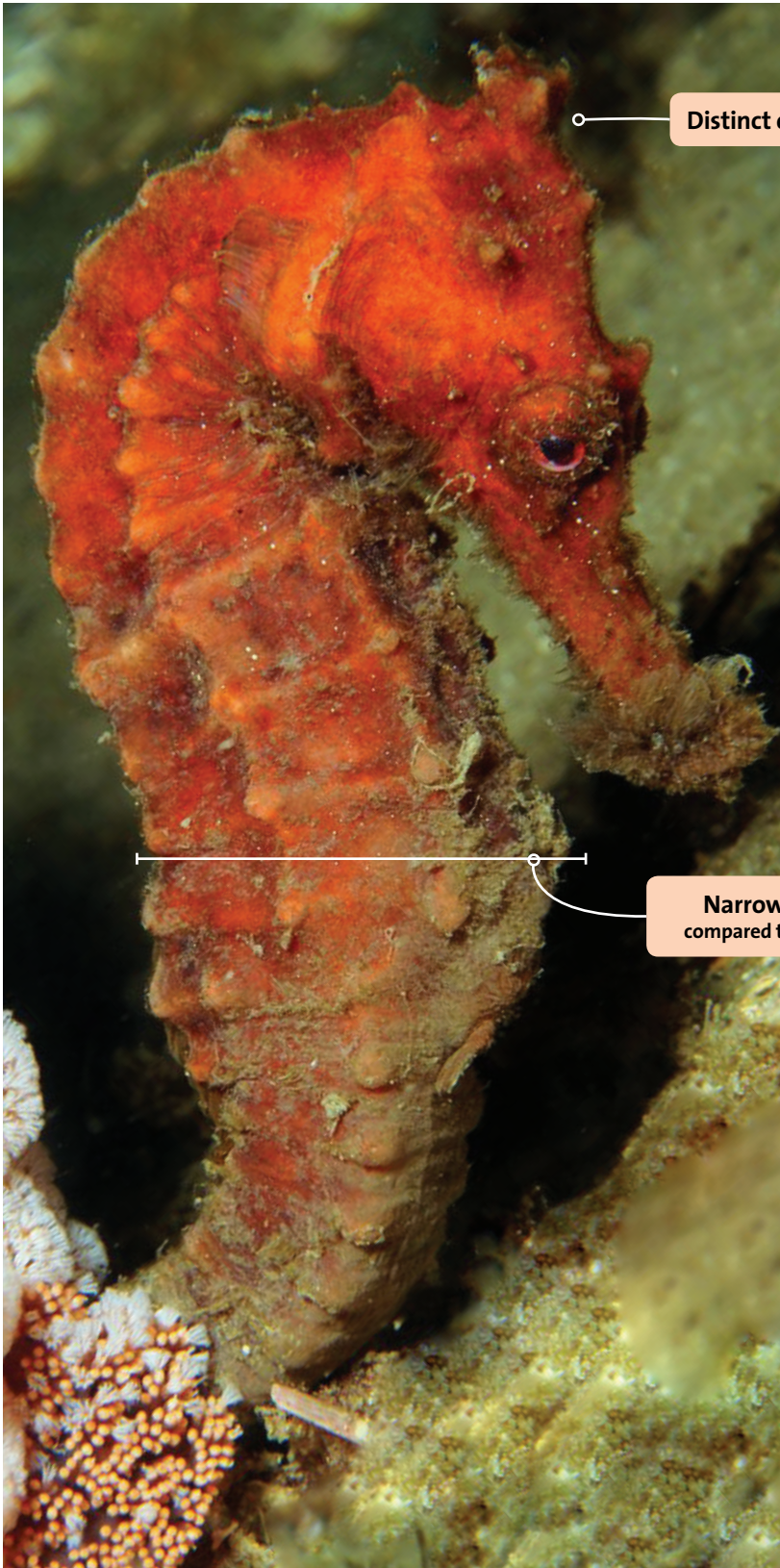
## *Hippocampus spinosissimus*



- Low or no nose spine (compare to *H. histrix*)
- Single or double cheek spines
- Blunter and shorter body spines than *H. histrix*

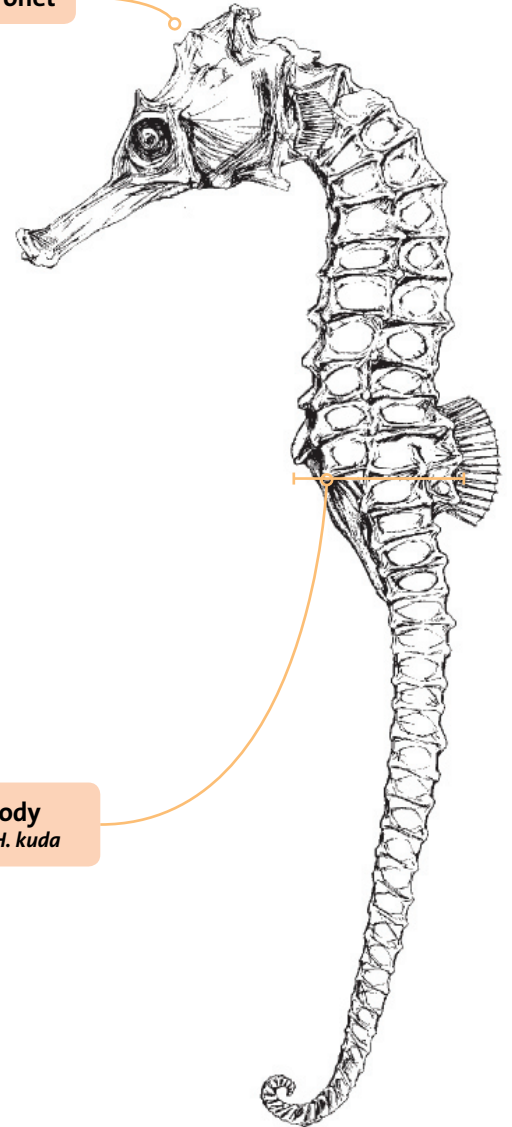
Photo: Shedd Aquarium/Brenna Hernandez

**KELLOGG'S SEAHORSE**  
*Hippocampus kelloggi*



Distinct coronet

Narrow body  
compared to *H. kuda*

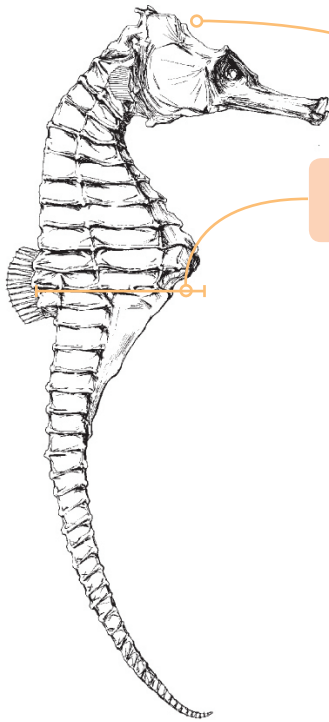


- Narrow body (compared to *H. kuda*)
- Thick trunk rings
- Distinct coronet
- Long, back-pointing, rounded cheek spine

Photo: Dave Harasti

# COMMON SEAHORSE *Hippocampus kuda*

- Deep body (“fatter” compared to *H. kelloggi*)
- Low/round coronet
- Spines are rounded bumps



Low coronet

Deeper body compared to *H. kelloggi*



Color variation of *H. kuda*.

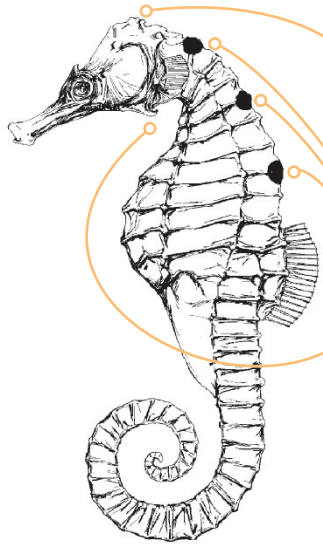


Photo: Wild Singapore/Ria Tan

Photo: Bettina Balnis



# THREE-SPOT SEAHORSE *Hippocampus trimaculatus*



Low coronet

3 dark spots (sometimes)

Hook-like cheek spine

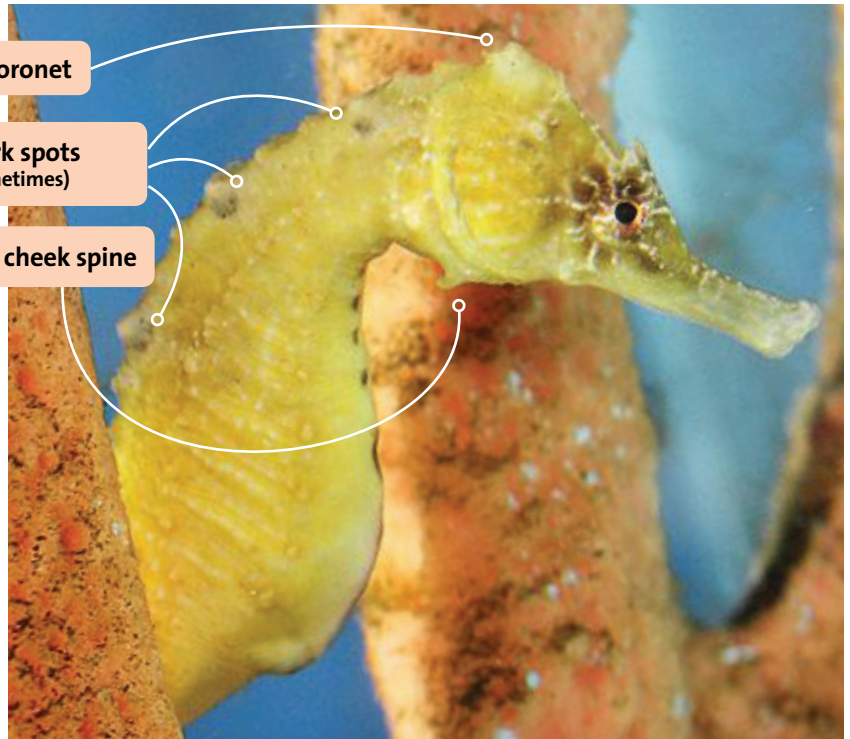
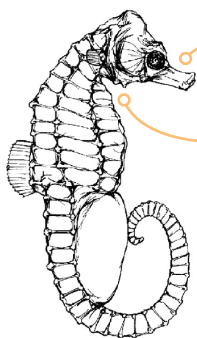


Photo: Tami Weiss/FusedJaw.com

- Hook-like cheek spine
- Hook-like eye spine
- (Sometimes) 3 dark spots along back of body

# JAPANESE SEAHORSE *Hippocampus mohnikei*

- Small body—adults have a maximum height of 8cm
- Very short snout compared to head
- Rounded, double cheek spines



Very short snout

Double cheek spines

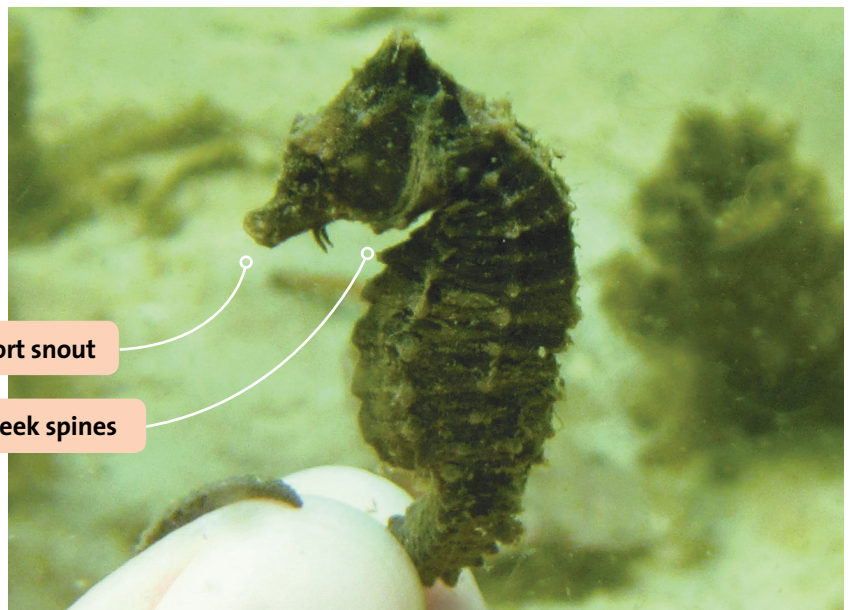


Photo: Lindsay Aylesworth



## WINGED SEAHORSE *Hippocampus alatus*



Flat, outward-pointing spines  
sometimes resembling wings

- Paired, flattened spines behind head that point outward, sometimes with skin flaps (resembling wings)
- No nose spine



Photo: Jeffrey Low

Photo: Jeffrey Low